



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

Symptoms triggered by a blood transfusion that may affect the blood, blood vessels, kidneys; heart, skin, central nervous system, lungs.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Less serious:

- Chills and fever.
- Backache or other aches and pains.
- Hives and itching.

More serious:

- Blood-cell destruction (hemolysis) causing shortness of breath, severe headache, chest or back pain and blood in the urine.

### CAUSES

Transfusions of a different blood type than that of the patient. This may occur from errors in matching or from the use of incompletely matched blood in an emergency.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Blood transfusions in emergency situations, when careful typing and matching of blood must be bypassed.
- Blood transfusions from donors who carry infections.
- Multiple blood transfusions.
- Rh negative mother.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Blood-bank and hospital personnel have safety procedures to prevent reactions except in situations that are uncontrollable (see Causes).
- Use of diphenhydramine (an antihistamine) and acetaminophen prior to transfusion may prevent minor reactions.
- Let the doctor or medical personnel know of any prior history of a response to transfusions.
- If surgery is planned at least 1 month in advance, your own blood may be drawn and stored for use during surgery, if necessary. Transfusion with your own blood is least likely to produce a reaction.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Most reactions clear gradually after the transfusion is halted. A few reactions are fatal.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Acute kidney failure.
- Anaphylaxis.
- Congestive heart failure from too rapid transfusion.



## TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Hospitalization is required. Patients receiving transfusions are usually in a hospital or outpatient surgical facility, and reactions can be treated when they occur.
- Stay awake and alert during a blood transfusion, if possible, so you can notify medical personnel immediately if symptoms occur.
- Transfusion will be stopped immediately at first sign of reaction.
- All vital signs will be monitored and preventive measures implemented to minimize complications.
- Supplemental oxygen if required.

### MEDICATIONS

- Antihistamines to decrease hives and itching.
- Cortisone drugs to decrease the likelihood of acute kidney failure.
- Antihypertensives, if blood pressure rises too high, or hypertensives, if blood pressure drops too low.

### ACTIVITY

Bed rest at first. Resume your normal activities as soon as symptoms improve after transfusion.

### DIET

No special diet.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

You or a family member has symptoms of a blood transfusion reaction during or after a transfusion. Call immediately. This is an emergency!